

**Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20591**

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Petition for Exemption: Eligibility of the Airline Transport Pilot Certificate with Restricted Privileges

Contact Information

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This document serves as the response to the Federal Aviation Administration's request for additional information pertaining to the requirements of 14 CFR 11.81 as highlighted below:

- The reasons why the exemption would not adversely affect safety or how the exemption would provide a level of safety at least equal to that provided by the rule from which you seek an exemption

As the airline industry continues to rebound from COVID-19 and recover from the substantial number of pilots who retired during the pandemic with their invaluable experiences, the demand for pilots over the next 20 years remains alarmingly high. According to Boeing's "Pilot and Technician Outlook 2021-2040" [1], 612,000 pilots will be required over the next 20 years worldwide, 130,000 of which will be required in North America. Incredibly, this amounts to 30,600 pilots per year worldwide and 6,500 pilots per year in North America alone.

From the Executive Summary of Boeing's report [1]:

"The outlook assumes continued investment in a steady pipeline of qualified personnel to replace those who have reached retirement age or who accepted one of the numerous buy-outs that were offered throughout the industry. A portion of those furloughed over the past year are expected to return to their jobs as the market recovers; however, others have pursued career changes and will not return to the industry. As a result, there will be strong competition to recruit and retain top-tier talent as more flights and routes are added."

From the Pilot summary of Boeing's report [1]:

"Prior to the downturn, the industry was heading toward a global pilot shortage and many airlines had begun using cadet pilot programs to build their talent pipeline. Some of these programs were paused or cancelled during the downturn, but it is critical for operators to focus on new pilot development. Many junior pilots lost their jobs last year, leading some to change careers and leave the industry altogether. Concurrently, many experienced pilots accepted voluntary early retirement packages, and those that remain will be unable to fly for commercial airlines once they reach the mandatory retirement age. With the dual impact of a smaller qualified pilot pool and accelerated retirements, it is expected that regional pilot shortages and strong competition for qualified pilots will re-emerge within the next few years. New pilots will benefit from continuing to build their hours through flight instruction and opportunities within the government, business aviation and general aviation sectors. Aspiring pilots who begin their flight training today will be well positioned to benefit from new piloting opportunities by the time they graduate."

"Training methodologies are evolving to focus on proficiencies and competencies rather than prescribed tasks, and it is expected that these will gradually be incorporated throughout the flight training curriculum."

The impending pilot shortage appears to have, at a minimum, been exacerbated by the pandemic. I ask that the FAA consider that their responsibility is not only to regulate but to ensure they are not restricting the pilot pipeline which could result in the diminished quality of pilots hired as operators' pilot demands remain high. In the interest of public safety, the FAA must remain vigilant that "top-tier talent" will continue to be the pilot hiring objective by ensuring a proper pilot pipeline and that a conflict of interest does not arise out of necessity for operators to maintain operations and prevent cancellations due to lack of crew and ultimately avoid hurting financial bottom lines. Every "top-tier talent" pilot who enters the cockpit after progressing through the pilot pipeline helps maintain the current level of safety by preventing a less quality pilot from entering the cockpit as the industry faces a critical demand.

I outlined my background in my original petition submission and why I humbly believe that my education and experience directly meet and exceed the knowledge required to meet the restricted ATP requirements prescribed in paragraph 9 of Advisory Circular 61-139 [2]. I failed to highlight why I humbly believe that the approval of my petition will significantly contribute to the safety of the public. My background has certainly provided the knowledge equal to or exceeding that of a 14 CFR 141 Restricted ATP program, but has also demonstrated myself as a critical thinker with a strong attention to detail. My experiences as a dispatcher and line support engineer with Delta Air Lines have allowed me to witness and required me to solve many critical situations and have allowed me to develop into a cautious and confident risk manager. Through these engineering and dispatch roles, I have witnessed firsthand "what can go wrong" and therefore the dangers of the six Hazardous Attitudes, i.e. Macho, Antiauthority, Impulsivity, Resignation, Self-confidence, Worry.

Boeing stated that "Training methodologies are evolving to focus on proficiencies and competencies rather than prescribed tasks". If this is indeed the case and that training departments, and likely the FAA as well through their approval of training curriculums, recognize the importance of "proficiencies and competencies" over meeting "prescribed tasks", then I would ask that the FAA view my petition through the same lens.

Of the 130,000 pilots that Boeing estimates will be hired over the next twenty years in North America, there will certainly be many who are less safe than I, if for no other reason than their lack of aviation knowledge and experience early in their careers. If this petition is approved and I am hired by the airlines, I will prevent one less-safe pilot from being hired. This is not an argument over semantics as a single unsafe pilot with poor ADM or one who makes poor decisions due to a lack of understanding can have catastrophic consequences for the public. This is a tangible reason why the hiring of a single pilot such as myself with a demonstrated history of safety in the airlines does improve the safety for the public.

I have nearly a decade working directly on the front line of Delta Air Lines operation in which I have demonstrated safe decision-making. I have had significant responsibility for the safety of the airline. In my senior engineering role, we were the last line of defense against an aircraft operating with damage or a discrepancy. We were involved when no manual provided relief for aircraft damage. I was routinely required to make no-go decisions and justify these decisions to the rest of the organization. I have made tough decisions such as cancelling a Boeing 777 flight in NRT headed to DTW at departure time while alone on a midnight shift over a small discrepancy resulting in significant revenue loss requiring justification of my decision to upper management. Now as a dispatcher, I plan fuel loads based on a balance of regulatory compliance, risk management, and the goal of completing the mission. In this role, I am required to delay or make a no-go decision when necessary as required by 14 CFR 121.533. I plead that the FAA consider how this knowledge, caution, and confidence in making no-go decisions is transferable to the safety in the cockpit.

There are many civilian paths to the airlines. Some people attend 14 CFR 141 programs and qualify for the Restricted ATP. Some must chip away at their flight hours over years while they work to support a family because they started later in life due to the extreme costs of flight training. Many people attend fast-track courses which train from zero flight time to an FAA Certified Flight Instructor in less than one year. Within a year of flight instructing, many of these pilots will have nearly 1,500 flight hours. Many of these people do not have any background in aviation prior to joining these fast-track programs, yet the FAA considers these pilots and myself to be in the same category – requiring us to obtain 1,500 hours prior to applying for an ATP certificate due to NOT meeting certain prescribed tasks despite our aviation knowledge and experience being incomparable. Additionally, this approach leaves the responsibility to discern “top-tier-talent” to the operators and businesses themselves.

This petition will allow me to continue to the airlines as the sacrifices for my wife and three sons are growing with my pursuit. Unless a new opportunity arises, currently the relationship and personal development risks for my family are significant with me working a full-time job and instructing to what amounts to a second full-time job. My personal situation is not the concern of the public but excluding a safe pilot from the pilot pipeline is the concern of the public. I attempt to think through all decisions and consider all outcomes. This is a part of my personality that affect all areas of my life including my aeronautical decision making – this trait necessary in aviation is transferable to all aspects of life.

With the demands of the airlines continuing to increase, ultimately the question is - who is safer in the cockpit, myself or the pilot who would be hired instead of me? For now, there is no clear answer, but as operators continue to hire pilots, the need to lower hiring requirements may arise. At that point, my path will have already been determined, however my value may be realized. Additionally, I do humbly believe that I am a “top-tier-talent” due to my education and experience and not simply “better than a bad situation”. For all the reasons highlighted in my original petition, I strongly believe that I am a value added to the safety of any cockpit. I have been acquiring knowledge at the Aerospace Engineering undergraduate and graduate degree levels and in Delta Air Lines 14 CFR 121 operation for nearly 15 combined years. I beg that the FAA recognize the value of the knowledge and experience I have acquired and how they directly improve my ADM and Risk Management in the cockpit – the knowledge and experience that my potential replacement does not possess.

I believe that granting this petition and exemption from the qualification requirement of 14 CFR 61.160 would not establish a precedent resulting in the FAA receiving similar or identical requests for exemption due to the extent and uniqueness of my education and work experience highlighted in my original submission. This would prevent the need to grant the same relief to many similar petitions resulting in rulemaking by exemption and remain in alignment with the Administrative Procedure Act. This would not result in broad grants of exemption or an apparent granting of an arbitrary exemption benefiting myself and creating a disadvantage of similarly situated aspiring pilots. The combination of my education at the graduate level in Aerospace Engineering and experience working on the front line of Delta Air Lines’ operation as a line support senior engineer and now as a dispatcher is sufficiently unique regarding these concerns.

My belief that my contribution to aviation safety in the cockpit is not based on a pilot shortage but that my education not only meets but exceeds the requirements of 14 CFR 61.160 and paragraph 9 of Advisory Circular 61-139 [2], and that my experience has developed me into a prudent and safe asset in the cockpit which, at a minimum, would “provide a level of safety at least equal to that provided by the rule from which I seek an exemption.” I will provide significant knowledge and experience in the cockpit on my first day as a first officer with a regional airline that will be difficult to match by other first officers. This will relieve the regional airline captain of many ADM pressures and responsibilities making every flight safer. This will be especially the case if major airline hiring continues resulting in relatively inexperienced captains in the regional airlines. The more experience a junior

first officer has prior to being hired greatly benefits the captain and safety of every flight. Young flight crews with first officers with very little aviation experience is certainly a risk compared to having a first officer with significant education and frontline aviation operational experience involving ADM and risk management.

I humbly and adamantly believe that the level of safety I would bring to the cockpit on my first day in the regional airlines is absolutely a significant improvement above my alternative due to my extensive background making consequential decisions concerning 14 CFR 121 weather analysis, 14 CFR 121 operator Operational Specifications and exemptions, and an understanding of jet aircraft performance and reliability that will be impossible to match by another new hire first officer into the regional airlines, and ultimately into a major airline.

I plead that the if the FAA has any doubts about my petition, that they provide me the opportunity to meet in person to further answer any questions and to demonstrate the person that I am.

Humbly,

Charles Hunt

References:

[1] <https://www.boeing.com/commercial/market/pilot-technician-outlook/>

[2] https://www.faa.gov/documentLibrary/media/Advisory_Circular/AC_61-139.pdf